

advantage in every sense, and also give honest tradesmen a better chance of meeting the times, and of performing their works in the old-fashioned substantial and effective manner.

The present evil calls loudly for remedy, as all moral principles are set aside to gain the ascendancy, either by goading the labourer, using inferior materials, or obliging the manufacturer to take ruinous prices, which from the circumstances he is often constrained to do; and as in the ultimate result I will not take on me to divine,—I have the honour to be Sir, your humble servant, and at the same time

A SUFFERER.

[Competition is in every sense to be deprecated as immoral: it is, without doubt, one of those kinds of strife which by Scripture deprecated.]

We lately knew a case in which a Dissenting minister, whose business it is to promulgate integrity, accepted joyfully a tender for thoroughly painting his house, which is a large one, and performing some other repairs to it, for little more than 30*l.*, maple-wood, and walnut-work included. Another tender was for about the value, and amounted to double the other: the fortunate contractor acknowledged that he lost 40 per cent. on the prime cost. Again, take the new churches, the parties interested will say "We are bound to have the work performed at the lowest possible rate: there are duties to perform," &c. &c. &c. "though we admit we should not so proceed in our own private affairs." Thus it is, the same men who would not wrong their neighbour of a farthing, combine in the robbery by which no church is indeed honestly obtained, most who ever engaged in building them being ruined. The case is very common for those who set no foot the building of a small church, to obtain 1,000*l.* at least of the property of the builder's creditors. The whole system is a foul stain upon commissioners, bishops, clergy, church-builders, church-subscribers, and the laity generally. Again, the whole system of competition for the designing of churches is still worse, being, in most cases, little more than a hoax—a scramble for a petty piece of patronage—in which the candidates, spite of their goodness of disposition, become as hungry ravens after the plunder, which turns out nothing but trouble and vexation; the cost with the fortunate mostly exceeding the payment, besides an infatuation of labour and trouble. The bishops and clergy know as well that competition leads to ruin as that sin leads to damnation. In either case the tempter be excused? The laraslee if he gave was to give a ram or a bullock without blemish; what an accursed offering to the Deity must then be a church or a chapel designed, built, and finished in chetery.—Ed.]

THE RAILROAD BRIDGE OF VENICE.

Sir,—In pursuing some of the back numbers of *THE BUILDER*, I was surprised to find in No. 35, a very erroneous, but luckily a short account, of the bridge which is now being built by the railroad company to connect the heretofore "Island city" with the mainland. Having very lately returned from a continental tour of some months' duration, in which I spent a fortnight at Venice, I have this bridge still before me, and will endeavour to describe the same.

It extends from Mestre to Venice, crossing *The Lagoon*, which is a large shallow surrounding the city on all sides, and in former times a great protection against the enemy; this lagoon has from 2 to 3 feet of salt water, on a sandy bottom; where the channels intersect it, the depth of the water is from 40 to 50 feet. This splendid bridge is commenced in many places, and up to the present time (I was there last month) there are at least 14 arches finished, or nearly so, and yet there is much more to be built before this magnificent work can be completed; the masonry of the arches is all stone, and the piers placed at certain distances are of brick faced with stone; the top of the arch to the surface of the water is, I should say, about 12 feet, perhaps not so much, as I had not the means of measuring it. No one besides those persons who have seen it can imagine the difficulties and labour required for this gigantic work; every morsel of earth, stone, brick, lime, iron, wood, &c. &c. and for the different materials, together with the fresh water for making the cement, is brought in boats from the mainland, a considerable distance, and yet

this has all been surmounted by the indefatigable zeal, talent, and industry of a German engineer, Milano by name, by whom the extraordinary undertaking is superintended, planned, and executed.

In your statement it is said, "of thirty-four arches which it is to have, twenty are already completed, &c." This is not giving the Continental engineer "fair play," and as we love doing that which is right in old England, I am sure you will gladly correct the error, and give the foreigner his due.

It is supposed that in addition to the bridge being a viaduct for travellers, merchandise, &c., it will also be an aqueduct to supply fresh water to Venice, which up to this time owes all its supply to a few rain-water tanks, and to the fresh-water boats which bring the water from the river Brenta, not a very inviting stream. It will indeed be a grand triumph of art when Venice is independent of the water-bots for fresh water carried on arches over the sea. The railroad itself will finally go on to Milan; at present it only runs from Mestre to Padua, about one hour's steam. Your readers will be glad to hear that the engines and one-half of the iron rails are of English manufacture; this does one's heart good when away from England, and makes a man proud of his dear country.—Yours, &c.,
[The proposed further communication will oblige.—Ed.]

C. T. A.

MISCELLANEA.

THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.—The following report has been presented by the select committee appointed to inquire into the progress of the building of the Houses of Parliament:—"That the Committee have met, and considered the subject-matter to them referred, and have examined witnesses, and have come to the following resolution, viz.:—That, considering the great inconvenience of the present House of Lords, and that such inconvenience will be greatly aggravated by the progress of the new buildings before the commencement of the session of 1845, no delay should take place in the building and preparing the new House of Lords, beyond what is absolutely required for the safety of the work; that the architect be directed so to conduct his operations as to secure the occupation of the new House of Lords, with temporary fittings, at the commencement of the session of 1845; that in case the architect, in the progress of the work of the new House of Lords, shall find that more time will be required in consequence of any apprehension of injurious consequences to the building, he shall report the same to the Commissioners of her Majesty's Wood and Forests, in order that such report may be communicated to this House in due time; that it does not appear to the committee that it is advisable that any alterations in the ventilation of the present House of Lords, which would lead to additional expense, should be adopted; and the committee have directed the minutes of evidence taken before them to be laid before your Lordships."

WYMOUTH.—The Harbour of Refuge Commission, having completed a careful survey of Weymouth Bay and Portland Roads, and examined all those who offered themselves and were qualified to afford the necessary information, took their departure on Wednesday, fully impressed with the natural advantages presented in their notice for forming a breakwater in Portland Roads, capable of affording shelter and protection to the shipping and maritime commerce of England, of being a counterpoise to Cherburgh (from which we are only distant sixty miles) and to Marseilles, and situated about midway between Portsmouth and Plymouth. In their visit to Portland the Commissioners were forcibly struck with the economy that would be attendant on the erection of a breakwater here—large quantities of stone, already quarried, and now only encumbering the land and of no value, seeming to invite the undertaking, and the owners would no doubt be glad to see it removed. This stone (the beach) being in large pieces of from ten tons and under, is admirably adapted for the construction of a breakwater; and we most sincerely congratulate the town and neighbourhood upon the prospect of this great and important national undertaking being carried into effect.—*Dorset Chronicle*.

PEAL OF BELLS FOR YORK MINSTER.—In the course of a few days a very fine and powerful peal of bells will be erected in one of the towers of York Minster, and for melody, richness of tone, and power it is said, they will far surpass any other in the north of England. They are the gift of the late Dr. Beckwith, the eminent physician of York, who, amongst his many charitable bequests, directed 2,000*l.* to be named in his will for the purpose of furnishing the great northern cathedral with a suitable peal of bells. They have been cast at the foundry of Messrs. Mears, in White-chapel, and are twelve in number, the largest weighing 33 cwt., and being in note C; the smallest 8 cwt., and in the whole being upwards of 10 tons in weight. In addition to the above, a complete "monster" clock bell is about being cast for the Minister at the same foundry, which is stated to be the largest in the world. It will be the enormous weight of 10 tons, and is of the size of the great bell at Oxford being 7 tons; Great Tom of Lincoln 5½ tons; and the great bell at St. Paul's 5 tons. It will be paid for by public subscription, 1,700*l.* being already collected.

A newly-invented compass, which has already attracted a great deal of attention among nautical men, was shown on Wednesday at the Hall of Commerce, some of the leading merchants having promised to inspect it. It is the invention of Mr. William Bush, the engineer, constructed for her Majesty's yacht the *Victoria* and *Albert*, being the counterpart of another meant as a present to the King of the French, the patentee intending to proceed to Paris with a view of submitting it to his Majesty. The appearance of the compass is in some respects quite different from the common one; magnetic bars in a neat case being attached to the framework of what we believe is technically called the box. Upon the lurching of the vessel these remain perpendicular, and the compass itself is entirely unaffected by local attraction. This has been sufficiently proved by repeated trials in Woolwich Royal Dockyards, where thousands of tons of iron are lying, and which nevertheless failed to disturb in any essential degree the patent compass, while that constructed on the ordinary principle was subjected to violent oscillations. There have also, as we understand, been several experiments on board iron steamers, so ill adapted to the right working of common compasses, and with the greatest success to the new one. Of course, if the *dradentum* of non-variability of the needle shall be found to have been fully supplied, and we confess from all we have heard and seen, despite the fruitless efforts that have been made for more than a century, we believe it now is, this will have to be ranked among the great discoveries of the age.—*Essex Standard*.

Mr. J. F. Francis, of Berkeley-square, London, has obtained the prize of 50*l.* offered by the Town Council for the best architectural design for two chapels and an entrance-lodge for the new Cemetery. There were twenty-five competitors from various parts of the country. The consecrated chapel is in the Norman style; the chancel is semi-circular, and the floor and walls are well adapted for monumental brasses. The chapel in the unconsecrated ground is in the early English style; it is smaller than the other, and is not provided with a chancel.—*Salisbury Journal*.

AMENDED NEW BUILDERS' BILL.—A meeting in committee of the Master Carpenters was held at the Freemasons' Tavern, on Monday last, to consider and report upon the above Bill. The report being agreed to, the chairman, Mr. H. Biers, was instructed to arrange for a deputation to Lord Lincoln, at the Woods and Forests, to impress upon his lordship several other improvements, and also to point out the objectionable parts in the amended Bill. We shall endeavour to lay before our readers a copy of the above report in our next publication.

THE ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF THE MASTER CARPENTERS' SOCIETY will take place at the West India Dock Tavern, Blackwall, on Tuesday next; the chair will be taken at four o'clock precisely. Visitors will be admitted at this meeting upon the introduction of a member, and, from the position of this society relative to the proceedings in Parliament on the "Buildings' Bill," it is anticipated that this meeting will be very fully attended.